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A LITTLE CHANGE.

A Farce.

IN ONE SCENE.

BY

SYDNEY GRUNDY.

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A LITTLE CHANGE.



Characters.

EDWIN
CAPTAIN PLUNGER	
ETHEL
MRS. PLUNGER		
WAITER

TIME :—*Present.*

SCENE.

AT DUMPINGTON.

☞ *Applications respecting the Performance of this Piece must be made to Mr. GRUNDY, 4, St. James's Square, Manchester, or to the Publisher.*

A LITTLE CHANGE.

SCENE.—*A Room in a Hotel, with windows in the flat, opening upon a balcony, and overlooking the sea; doors R. and L.*

EDWIN, *with a newspaper, yawning and stretching,*
ETHEL *gazing at him.*

ETHEL. Edwin!

EDWIN. Yes, my dear. (*yawns*)

ETHEL. Edwin!

EDWIN. What's the matter?

ETHEL. That's the fifteenth time you've yawned since we've been married.

EDWIN. Do you say so? Only fifteen yawns, and we've been married——

ETHEL. Ten days, three and twenty hours, and sixteen minutes. Does it seem that long?

EDWIN. My darling, seem that long! How can you ask such questions? I should think it doesn't. I declare, it only seems about three weeks!

ETHEL. Three weeks!

EDWIN. No, no! Did I say three weeks? I beg your pardon, I meant days.

ETHEL. I don't believe you did!

EDWIN. O yes, my dear, indeed I meant to say days.

ETHEL. You're not tired of me already, are you?

EDWIN. My dear Ethel, that's the twenty-second time you've asked me whether I'm not tired of you.

ETHEL. Well, you're not, are you?

EDWIN. I'm not tired of you, my darling, but I'm getting very tired of saying so, and I'm most tired of all of this confounded neighbourhood.

ETHEL. Oh, Edwin, it's the most delightful place I ever saw! Why, everybody says the scenery about here is the very scenery to pass through.

EDWIN. I am quite of their opinion. It is certainly not scenery to stop in.

ETHEL. And the chambermaid was telling me this morning how delighted everybody was who went away.

EDWIN. I can completely sympathise with them; I'm sure I shall be charmed when I go.

ETHEL. Why, what would you have? There are the loveliest sunsets.

EDWIN. Now, that's just what I object to. I don't like the suns about here; these blazing agricultural suns make such a fuss about retiring for the night. They're not content unless they've everybody looking at 'em. Now, a respectable manufacturing sun gets behind a good thick cloud when it goes to bed; and I must say I think that's much more reputable.

ETHEL. Then the moons. You must confess the moons here are the loveliest imaginable.

EDWIN. Then, that stupid old moon. Now, can anything be more absurd than standing on a balcony and staring at the same old moon night after night?

ETHEL. Edwin, how can you talk about the same old moon, when there's a new one every month?

EDWIN. A pretty swindle that is, too! A new one every month. That's just as like the one that went before it, as the one that'll come after it. I like a little change.

ETHEL. You didn't cut the moon up that way once. You used to look at it for hours. You were quite smitten with it then.

EDWIN. I freely grant that if I stood and gazed at it for hours, I must have been considerably struck by it.

ETHEL. Oh, Edwin dear, don't you remember that night in particular——

EDWIN. Do I remember that night? Oh, Ethel, shall I ever forget that night—that night when—by the by, my dear, which night were you alluding to?

ETHEL. I said that one in particular.

EDWIN. Precisely so, my love, but then there were so

many ones in particular, and all are so indelibly impressed upon my memory, I can't remember one of them.

ETHEL. I can remember all of them. Your saying that you'd rather have me than all the world.

EDWIN. Did I say that?

ETHEL. Twice over: for I asked you if you were quite sure.

EDWIN. And I replied——

ETHEL. As sure as you were you.

EDWIN. Then I don't think the observation goes for much; since, if I made so foolish a remark, I certainly was not myself.

ETHEL. Then wouldn't you give all the world for me?

EDWIN. I should be very silly if I did, for if I had the world to give, I should have you to start with. See?

ETHEL. (*with reluctance*) Yes.

EDWIN. You quite see?

ETHEL. Yes—but you would give all the world for me, for all that, wouldn't you? At least you'd rather have me than any other two people put together?

EDWIN. Certainly, my dear. I don't much care for freaks of nature of that sort.

ETHEL. And you've got me, haven't you?

EDWIN. Yes, and you've got me.

ETHEL. And you're very happy, aren't you?

EDWIN. Oh yes.

ETHEL. You're in Paradise?

EDWIN. Exactly so.

ETHEL. And so am I.

EDWIN. Do you like it?

ETHEL. Well, of course I do. Don't you?

EDWIN. Oh yes! I like it very much; but then, you know I like a little change. I think a little Paradise is very nice indeed, but don't you think that one may have more Paradise than's good for one? I can't help thinking it's a great mistake to take one's Paradise neat. Now we've been taking ours uncommon neat. Just think, the hours we've been cooped up in that confounded private room upstairs.

ETHEL. Well, Edwin dear, you said you could not

stand us being the only people there, so we've come down into the public room.

EDWIN. And now we *have* come, we're the only people here. I never knew such a disgusting place. Now, if we'd had a little change——

ETHEL. You might have met that odious Miss Carruthers, I suppose you mean—the girl that threw you over.

EDWIN. Miss Carruthers is not odious, my dear, and Miss Carruthers didn't throw me over. Miss Carruthers was uncommonly fond of me.

ETHEL. Why didn't she have you, then?

EDWIN. Because she didn't get the chance. My only apprehension is lest I threw Miss Carruthers over.

ETHEL. If you did, she must have tumbled on her nose, for I am sure it's broken.

EDWIN. No, my dear, it's you who are responsible for anything that there may be to do with Miss Carruthers' nose, for it was you who put it out. But nothing is the matter with it. It's a lovely nose—especially the end of it.

ETHEL. Her eyes appear to think so, for they're always looking there. But that may be, because it is the only object they can look at both together.

EDWIN. You don't mean to say she squints!

ETHEL. Abominably.

EDWIN. Nothing of the sort.

ETHEL. I never saw such eyes!

EDWIN. Well, well, whatever they may be, she hasn't made them.

ETHEL. But she has, repeatedly—at you. And that's what I object to. If folks do squint, they can't help it, but if folks who squint go on as if they didn't squint, why they deserve to have their eyes flung in their teeth.

EDWIN. Now, why bring teeth into the question? What have Miss Carruthers' teeth done that they should be flung at?

ETHEL. What they've done I'm sure I don't know, but I should imagine a good deal. They look as if they'd seen hard service.

EDWIN. You compare them to a regiment of soldiers.

ETHEL. Excuse me : to a regiment of volunteers : I should never have dreamt of comparing them to anything regular.

EDWIN. Oh, nonsense, they're a string of pearls.

ETHEL. Yes, pearls that have gone yellow.

EDWIN. Anyhow, you must admit, she has a very amiable mouth.

ETHEL. I don't think that her mouth is amiable at all, or it would cover up her teeth more.

EDWIN. Well, what feature are you going to enlarge on next? Her ears?

ETHEL. I'm sure her ears don't want enlarging on; they're big enough already.

EDWIN. Now there's only her hair left. Abuse her hair.

ETHEL. Oh, no, my love, she's not responsible for that. It's not her own.

EDWIN. If she were only here now!

ETHEL. But she's not; and what's more you're not going to where she is.

EDWIN. I don't care where I go, so long as I leave this place.

ETHEL. But you won't leave this place. We stop here a month.

EDWIN. Ethel!

ETHEL. A month.

EDWIN. A week!

ETHEL. A month.

EDWIN. A fortnight!

ETHEL. A month.

EDWIN. There's not a soul here.

ETHEL. Well, what of it? You're a married man.

EDWIN. Alas!

ETHEL. And you've no business carrying on with Miss Carruthers, and Miss Carruthers has no business carrying on with you.

EDWIN. But she doesn't know I'm married. Ha, ha, ha!

ETHEL. She must have seen it in the papers.

EDWIN. But I didn't put it in the papers.

ETHEL. You don't mean to say you haven't put our marriage in the papers!

EDWIN. Not in one of them, my dear. I daren't. That girl had so made up her mind that I was going to propose to her, that the announcement of our marriage would have given her fits.

ETHEL. And so it isn't in the papers! Oh! it isn't half being married, when it isn't in the papers! We stop here for two months.

EDWIN. We leave here to-morrow. (*at the window*) Ethel! Ethel! I distinctly see a woman. Positively—yes, a woman has arrived. She turns this way. She looks—she smiles—she bows. By jingo, Miss Carruthers! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

ETHEL. No! (*runs to window*) It is her! We leave here to-morrow.

EDWIN. (*sitting down firmly*) We stop here for two months.

ETHEL. Oh! (*jumps up to window*) Well, I declare. Well, did I ever? This is charming. (*to some one without*) How d' you do? How are you? Quite well, thank you; so glad that you've come. Oh, Edwin, if there's not that dear delightful Captain Plunger.

EDWIN. Eh?

ETHEL. You know. That darling Captain Plunger.

EDWIN. You don't mean that—that infernal fellow with the whiskers, whom I've been so nearly kicking several times.

ETHEL. That very man. My favourite admirer.

EDWIN. Ethel, you're a married woman.

ETHEL. But he doesn't know it, dear. He can't.

EDWIN. Why not?

ETHEL. Because it wasn't in the paper, love. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ta, ta. I'm going to put another dress on, and some more hair, and to go on just as if I wasn't married, dear. He doesn't know I am, because it wasn't in the papers. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Not in one of them! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! *Exit, R.*

EDWIN. I've made a horrible mistake. I ought to have pretended that it *was* put in the papers, every one of them, except the ones that can be got at Dumpington. A pretty mess my candour's got me into. This is the consequence of telling one's wife the truth. But who'd

have thought that fellow with the whiskers would turn up? I did think that at last I'd given him the slip. He dogs me everywhere. I never could get half a dozen words with either Ethel or that Miss Carruthers, but he put his whiskers in between us, and it was all up with me. What chance has intellect with whiskers? I shall have to give the local barber half a sovereign to clip one off by accident. Meanwhile, the first thing I must do, must be to let him know that Ethel's married. Oh, no, hang it, the first thing he'd do, would be to tell the tale to Miss Carruthers. I must be a bachelor again; there's no help for it. It'll at any rate be a relief to the monotony of Dumpington. On even terms I'd fight it out with pleasure, but I'm overweighted. Nature is *not* fair. She doesn't divide the whiskers properly.

Enter MRS. PLUNGER, R., advancing quickly to him.

MRS. P. Oh, Mr. Larkspur, how d'you do? You can't think how rejoiced I was to see you at the window just now; Dumpington is so extremely dull without society.

EDWIN. It is indeed. I'm sure I was entranced when I saw you. I was quite longing for a little change.

MRS. P. Have you been here some time?

EDWIN. Ten days—and I have seen about as many people. (*they sit*)

MRS. P. I suppose it's not the season just now.

EDWIN. I supposed so, too, until my first week's bill came in, when I discovered that the season was exactly at its height—at least, the charges were at theirs.

MRS. P. What in the world induced you to come here?

EDWIN. I wasn't induced to come here. I was brought.

MRS. P. Indeed. Who brought you?

EDWIN. Mrs. Larkspur.

MRS. P. Mrs. Larkspur!

EDWIN. (*aside*) Oh dear me, what *have* I said? Yes, I was brought here by—my mother.

MRS. P. Oh, your mother. Then, your mother's here?

EDWIN. Yes, she was recommended the sea air.

MRS. P. She's not well?

EDWIN. No, she's not very well. In fact she's so ill that she has to keep her room.

MRS. P. Oh dear, I'm sorry to hear that. I fear, then, I shan't see her.

EDWIN. I'm afraid you won't—(*aside*) considering she's been dead this twenty years.

MRS. P. But you're not quite alone here, I perceive. I met Miss Darlington upon the stairs.

EDWIN. Yes, she is staying here.

MRS. P. Upon the look out for a husband, I suppose. How very plain she's grown!

EDWIN. Plain?

MRS. P. Don't you think so?

EDWIN. Well, perhaps she isn't quite so pretty as she used to be.

MRS. P. Pretty? She never was that. She once had a passable figure.

EDWIN. An exquisite figure.

MRS. P. Do you think so? What extraordinary taste you men have! Anyhow, she's gone off.

EDWIN. (*jumping up*) Gone off! What, with Captain Plunger?

MRS. P. Ha, ha, ha! You didn't think he'd run away with her? I meant, gone off in looks.

EDWIN. Oh. (*drops again into a chair*)

MRS. P. By the way, the captain is here: came by by the same train as we did: and we all know how she's angled for him.

EDWIN. I don't though, I'm sure.

MRS. P. You don't know how Miss Darlington has angled after Captain Plunger? Why, where ever have you been this five years? It's the talk of the whole regiment. So that there was some reason for your exclamation, though not much; for any one at all acquainted with the parties would be quite sure Captain Plunger wouldn't run away with Ethel Darlington.

EDWIN. Why not?

MRS. P. Oh! Captain Plunger is a man of taste. He couldn't possibly put up with any girl of that sort.

EDWIN. What sort?

MRS. P. Why, the sort of girl who is so very indiscriminate in the attention she receives. He has too great a scorn for such a character.

EDWIN. And yet I think at the Artillery Ball I saw him putting up with Ethel Darlington to the extent of half-a-dozen dances in succession. He contrives to hide his scorn uncommonly.

MRS. P. He would do. Captain Plunger is a perfect gentleman. He'd flirt with her, no doubt.

EDWIN. I've seen him.

MRS. P. He might even get engaged to her.

EDWIN. Indeed!

MRS. P. But he would never marry such a girl.

EDWIN. Although he'd get engaged to her?

MRS. P. Oh dear, no! Captain Plunger is a man of fine morality.

EDWIN. I always thought he was that sort of man.

MRS. P. The more one sees of him, the more one likes him. (*rising*)

EDWIN. Really! Then, seeing him must have the opposite effect to hearing of him, for the more I hear of him the more I feel inclined to kick him. (*rising*)

MRS. P. You don't like him?

EDWIN. I detest him!

MRS. P. Oh, you jealous man! You're envious of his success amongst the ladies.

EDWIN. I should like to cut his whiskers off.

MRS. P. And so shear Samson of his strength.

EDWIN. However, I won't vent my malice upon you; I must point out the beauties of the neighbourhood. It won't take long.

MRS. P. We'd better go outside to see them, hadn't we?

EDWIN. I think you'll see enough of them from where you stand. Now, are you looking?

MRS. P. Yes.

EDWIN. Up there's the sky.

MRS. P. Well, I've seen that before.

EDWIN. Oh, if you think that you'll see anything in Dumpington you haven't seen before, why, you'll be disappointed.

MRS. P. Well, what next?

EDWIN. Down there's the sand.

MRS. P. Yes, don't they call it something else? Not sand, but something like it.

EDWIN. Strand?

MRS. P. Strand! that's it.

EDWIN. Yes, some people call it strand. The grocers call it sugar.

MRS. P. How very playful of them! Well, go on, and tell me the next beauty.

EDWIN. Over there's the sun.

MRS. P. But I can't look at that, because of my complexion.

EDWIN. Oh! I'm sorry you can't look at that, because it's the last beauty of Dumpington.

MRS. P. Is that all?

EDWIN. That's all.

MRS. P. Good gracious, how do people pass their time here?

EDWIN. In the morning, they sit and look at the sun. In the evening, they sit and look at the moon. Oh dear, I quite forgot—occasionally you can see the sea.

MRS. P. The sea!

EDWIN. Sometimes—through a strong telescope.

MRS. P. You goose, it's there.

EDWIN. Why so it is, the tide has actually arrived. For the first time in the ten days that I have been at Dumpington the tide is coming in. It's always been going out before. Hush! Hark!

MRS. P. What to?

EDWIN. The music of the spheres. (*a German band strikes up outside*)

BOTH. Oh law!

Exeunt arm-in-arm through window, to stop band.

Enter CAPTAIN PLUNGER, led by WAITER, L.

WAITER. This is the public room, sir.

CAPT. Oh, good gracious, do send some one out to stop that very brassy band. (*it stops*)

WAITER. The band, sir? Oh, that's nothing. You should hear the Christy Minstrels—they as never play in London, sir—the two men with the harp and fiddle, the blind man with the accordion, the woman with the tambourine, the lad with the tin whistle, the three foreign girls with the two banjoes and a drum, the Punch and Judy

Show, the bagpipes, and the barrel-organs with the monkeys, all agoing at once. It makes it very lively, sir.

CAPT. Yes, deadly lively.

WAITER. Dumpington is very musical.

CAPT. Then, Dumpington is very different from its musicians.

WAITER. It's the children what they play to, sir. We've a large family on the ground floor just recovering from the measles, a small family on the floor above as have just had the whooping cough—oh, in the night, sir, they whoops awful—and a middling family in the next room what's just half way through the scarlet fever; and a very nice attack they're having.

CAPT. Heaven preserve us! then is Dumpington a hospital?

WAITER. A hospital? I don't know about that, sir. The Montpelier of the North, they calls it.

CAPT. Who does?

WAITER. Well, the railway companies.

CAPT. How d' you get down to the sea?

WAITER. You go along the pier, sir.

CAPT. Oh, you walk along the pier.

WAITER. Not many people walk, sir—it's a mile long. Trains start every fifteen minutes.

CAPT. That's if anybody wants to go?

WAITER. Precisely so, sir; but as no one ever does want, they don't start at all, sir.

CAPT. What the dickens do the people do then?

WAITER. Well, they're mostly wheeled about in Bath chairs.

CAPT. Oh, preserve us! Where is Mrs. Plunger?

WAITER. Went out on the balcony as we came in, sir—with a gentleman.

CAPT. A gentleman! Did she seem to know him?

WAITER. Very much, sir.

CAPT. You can go. I'll join them.

WAITER. Beg your pardon, sir, but I don't think they want you to.

CAPT. Go to the—kitchen, fellow! *Exit WAITER, L.*
Upon my word, my wife has lost no time in finding a companion. I don't think that I can pay her a more

fitting compliment than that of following her example. It's a lucky thing for Dumpington I saw Miss Darlington just now, or I'd have gone by the first train that starts for anywhere. I wonder if she knows I'm married? Let us hope the London papers don't reach here. (*sees paper*) What's this? The "Dumpington Gazette." It's not in that. (*sits down and reads*) "Salubrity of Dumpington. The slanderous assertion that this fashionable watering place, the annual rendezvous of such a galaxy of rank and beauty, is infected with an epidemic, is the baseless calumny of venomous malignity. The only fifteen cases in the neighbourhood are yielding rapidly to the invigorating influence of our sea air, and the unflagging energy and skill of Dr. Mumps, the able and experienced practitioner, who advertises weekly in the 'Dumpington Gazette.' "

Meanwhile ETHEL has re-entered, R., and sat beside him.

ETHEL. Do you find the paper very interesting?

CAPT. (*jumping up*) Miss Darlington! I beg ten thousand pardons for not seeing you before. This is indeed a happy meeting. I was reading in the paper that a galaxy of rank and beauty was at Dumpington, and I was wondering where the beauty was, unconscious that it was so near me.

ETHEL. Very near indeed, for Miss Carruthers is at this hotel.

CAPT. I beg your pardon, who is?

ETHEL. Miss Carruthers.

CAPT. What, is Miss Carruthers Miss Carruthers still?

ETHEL. Oh, dear me, yes.

CAPT. (*aside*) Hurrah! She doesn't know I'm married. "Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's——" (*a tambourine strikes up outside*) Oh, dear!

ETHEL. There's that eternal woman with the tambourine; do send her away, please!

CAPT. (*runs to window*) There, that'll do; we've got no coppers. (*coming back*) You were saying——

ETHEL. I was saying that Miss Carruthers is still Miss Carruthers, and is likely to remain so. That is, if men really have the taste that they pretend to.

CAPT. Do you really think so? Oh, I don't know, she's a dashing girl.

ETHEL. I don't like dashing girls.

CAPT. Well, when I say a dashing girl, I mean she's undeniably accomplished.

ETHEL. I have heard she paints!

CAPT. Ah, you don't care for her. Well, I admit, she is a little difficult to understand.

ETHEL. Oh, dear me, no! I call her very plain.

CAPT. And yet she is considered beautiful by some.

ETHEL. I only know one person who considers so, and that's herself.

CAPT. Oh, but I know another.

ETHEL. Do you? What's the curious creature's name?

CAPT. His name——

ETHEL. *His* name. I thought it was a man. Well, what's his name?

CAPT. His name is Larkspur.

ETHEL. Larkspur!

CAPT. Larkspur.

ETHEL. It's my turn to beg your pardon now. You're very much mistaken. Mr. Larkspur doesn't care for her at all.

CAPT. Indeed; I wonder what possessed him to propose to her.

ETHEL. Propose to her!

CAPT. Yes, don't you know that he's proposed to her?

ETHEL. I don't believe it—not a word of it!

CAPT. I have it on the very best authority.

ETHEL. On whose?

CAPT. On Miss Carruthers' own.

ETHEL. Oh! Miss Carruthers' own! ha, ha, ha! Captain Plunger, now I should have thought with your experience of the world you would have known that upon such a subject Miss Carruthers' was the very worst authority you could possibly have.

CAPT. I'm sure she hinted that he had proposed to her.

ETHEL. That I can quite believe. But she is labouring under a mistake. The wish was husband to the thought.

CAPT. I think the probabilities are in her favour. Mr. Larkspur is the sort of man who would propose to

her, and it would only be one more rejection added to the quantity he has already suffered.

ETHEL. What, has Mr. Larkspur then proposed to someone else?

CAPT. They say, he never sees a girl three times without proposing to her.

ETHEL. And he's always unsuccessful?

CAPT. Well, I did hear a vague rumour that some girl or other had at last had pity on him,—but by Jove, she must have been hard up.

ETHEL. Indeed! He must have been astonished at his sudden change of fortune.

CAPT. Quite knocked over. So I heard. He'd got so used to being rejected, that he felt quite disappointed when he was accepted. And between us two——

ETHEL. Yes.

CAPT. I shouldn't like his wife to hear it—but between us two, he told a friend of mine that if he'd thought she'd have accepted him, he'd never have proposed to her.

ETHEL. Did he? How very amusing!

CAPT. Oh, extremely entertaining. It'd be a very good joke to tell his wife.

ETHEL. I wouldn't do that. It is a very good joke, but perhaps she mightn't see it.

CAPT. Perhaps not: wives are very dull. But he's a rum fish. Everybody cuts his joke at him. Indeed, he's got so laughed at that he's started for Australia.

ETHEL. Do you say so?

CAPT. At Southampton now.

ETHEL. He's at Southampton?

CAPT. So my friend says.

ETHEL. I'm afraid your friend is not to be implicitly relied upon, for Mr. Larkspur happens to be here.

CAPT. In Dumpington?

ETHEL. At this hotel.

CAPT. Then, that's the man who's flirting with my—that is, Miss Carruthers.

ETHEL. Where?

CAPT. Upon the balcony.

ETHEL. Is Mr. Larkspur on the balcony with Miss Carruthers? (*runs to window*)

CAPT. I have reason to believe so.

ETHEL. So he is. Oh, very well. (*returns*) Shall we go out upon the balcony?

CAPT. The waiter said he thought they didn't want to be interrupted.

ETHEL. Don't they? That's the very reason, then, why we should interrupt them. Would you kindly let me take your arm?

CAPT. With pleasure.

ETHEL. Won't it be delightful?

CAPT. Oh, enchanting! To recline against the balustrade, and listen to the sighing of the sad sea waves. (*barrel organ starts outside*)

ETHEL. Oh, there's that dreadful barrel organ. Please do stop it.

CAPT. (*runs to window*) There, there, my good fellow. He won't stop. My good man, please—It's no go. Stop that row, you noisy vagabond! He won't stop.

ETHEL. Oh, I'd give him something. He won't go unless you do.

CAPT. You'll give him something, did you say?

ETHEL. I said, I would, if I were you.

CAPT. Oh, just so. Look here, you! I'll give you—(*organ stops*)—into custody! (*organ begins again*) How much? He says it's sixpence if he plays and eighteen-pence to go away.

ETHEL. Well, give him eighteen-pence.

CAPT. You'll give him eighteen-pence?

ETHEL. He would not care for me. You'd better give it him.

CAPT. Oh, certainly. (*pulls money out*) Dear me, I haven't got a sixpence.

ETHEL. Haven't you? I daresay he wouldn't mind two shillings.

CAPT. (*aside*) This is deucedly expensive. (*throws a coin*) There, you scoundrel! (*organ stops*) And now, might I have the pleasure? (*offering arm*)

ETHEL. (*taking it*) Would you take my fan?

CAPT. I shall be charmed. These English beggars have such barbarous instruments. (*the bagpipes start*).

ETHEL. There that's the Scotchman. He's the worst

of all. Pray do get rid of him. The bagpipes always make me ill.

CAPT. (*again at window*) My dear good fellow—you infernal rascal, stop that hideous din!

ETHEL. Oh, send him off—do send him off. I'm going to be so ill.

CAPT. Hi! How much will you go away for? What? He says he never goes away for less than half-a-crown.

ETHEL. He doesn't. The bagpipes never do. They know that they can get the money. Give it him.

CAPT. (*aside*) I shall be ruined. (*throws another coin*) There! Be off! (*they cease*) Now, shall we go?

ETHEL. Would you relieve me of my shawl?

CAPT. Delighted, I am sure. (*they move slowly towards the window, R, arm in arm, he bowing down to her, she smiling up at him*)

Re-enter EDWIN through L. window.

EDWIN. I'm getting on tremendously with Miss Carruthers. This is great fun; I do like a little change. Now, if Ethel wasn't so absurdly fond of me—if she would only flirt a bit—(*perceiving her*) Holloa! It strikes me she is flirting a bit. (*Boy outside has just commenced to sing*)

ETHEL. Oh, really, Captain Plunger!

BOY. (*singing*) "And the captain with his whiskers stole a sly glance at me."

EDWIN. Oh, come, I say, you know. It strikes me Ethel's flirting a good deal. It seems *she* likes a little change. This isn't such great fun after all.

ETHEL. I hope that no one will disturb us.

CAPT. I'd advise them not.

Exeunt through R. window.

EDWIN. (*who has come round gradually, R.*) Oh, hang it, I'll go after them. This isn't fun at all.

Exit through same window.

Re-enter MRS. PLUNGER through L. window.

MRS. P. Where's Mr. Larkspur got to I should like to know? I'm not going to be left in this way, I can tell him.

Re-enter ETHEL, *through* L. *window*.

ETHEL. There they both are. Won't there be a row?

MRS. P. My dearest Ethel!

ETHEL. Oh my darling Alice! (*they embrace*)

MRS. P. I've been having such fun.

ETHEL. So have I.

MRS. P. I'm in the middle of a desperate flirtation.

ETHEL. That's exactly what I'm coming to myself.

MRS. P. Ah, but my dear, you don't know what flirtation is. Wait till you're married. Then's the time.

ETHEL. But *you're* not married?

MRS. P. I'm not married! Why, my dear, where have you been this age? I made sure everybody knew that I was married this day week.

ETHEL. I've no doubt you endeavoured to let everybody know, my love; but being away upon my honeymoon, I didn't hear of it.

MRS. P. What are *you* married too?

ETHEL. Good gracious! You didn't know that I was married ten days ago! Where have you been this century?

MRS. P. Then, we've both of us got husbands.

ETHEL. But I got mine first.

MRS. P. Perhaps so. You were always in a hurry to get married.

ETHEL. Was I, love? Then I'd a fault which you had not, for everyone says you've been long enough about it.

MRS. P. It's quite true I didn't snap at the first offer that was made to me.

ETHEL. You didn't snap at it, indeed; you were uncommon civil to it. So polite, in fact, that you accepted it.

MRS. P. The offer that my husband made to me was not the first by any means.

ETHEL. Then it's true, is it? I had heard that he'd proposed to several other girls before.

MRS. P. How could you, when you hadn't heard I was married?

ETHEL. But I had heard you were going to be.

MRS. P. Then, why were you astonished when you found I was?

ETHEL. Because, my love, I had dismissed the rumour as incredible.

MRS. P. And who did rumour say had got possession of me?

ETHEL. Rumour didn't say that anyone had got possession of you, dear; it said that you had got possession of him.

MRS. P. Of whom?

ETHEL. I really couldn't catch his name—they spoke of him as “that poor fellow.”

MRS. P. I don't think that Captain Plunger stands in need of their commiseration.

ETHEL. Captain Plunger! What, is Captain Plunger married?

MRS. P. Captain Plunger is.

ETHEL. And yet he had the impudence to make me think he wasn't?

MRS. P. Do you mean to say it's Captain Plunger you've been flirting with?

ETHEL. For all the world as if he was a bachelor! the wretch!

MRS. P. The monster! But I'm even with him; for he can't have flirted half as hard with you as I have done with Mr. Larkspur.

ETHEL. Mr. Larkspur! Is it Mr. Larkspur you've been flirting with?

MRS. P. Of course it is. He always was a favourite of mine.

ETHEL. But you were not a favourite of his. He doesn't care for you a bit.

MRS. P. I fear, myself, it's a good deal.

ETHEL. It isn't though, I tell you. He can't bear the sight of you.

MRS. P. I dare say not, my love. It will of course remind him that I am another's.

ETHEL. But he doesn't care whose you are.

MRS. P. Well, well, you needn't get excited, dear. If you *are* married, Mr. Larkspur's state of mind is of no consequence to you.

ETHEL. It's just because I'm married that it is of consequence to me—for I'm his wife.

MRS. P. You Mr. Larkspur's wife? Then Mr. Larkspur's married?

ETHEL. I should think he is.

MRS. P. I am so glad. It was so very painful to suppose that he was dying for me.

ETHEL. If you have supposed so, you have given yourself a great deal of superfluous anxiety. He was never better in his life.

MRS. P. I'm very glad to hear it. So he's married you, my dear? I was afraid, when he perceived I was inflexible, he would do something rash.

ETHEL. Do you mean to say that he's proposed to you?

MRS. P. I never let him go so far, my pet. But you should see how he makes love to me.

ETHEL. I will. I'll hide behind the curtains here, like this—(*retires among the curtains*) and listen with both ears.

MRS. P. Do, darling; and you'll have a pleasant time of it.

Re-enter EDWIN, through window, L.

You've come back, have you, Mr. Larkspur?

EDWIN. I have come back, Mrs. Plunger.

MRS. P. Oh! You've found out that I'm married?

EDWIN. And whom to. I must say that I think you might have told me. I consider that flirtation by a married woman is most reprehensible.

MRS. P. I quite agree with you. I think it almost as abominable as flirtation by a married man.

EDWIN. Eh?

MRS. P. I congratulate you, Mr. Larkspur.

EDWIN. Then you've heard *I'm* married? Well I am. I'm married to the nicest girl in England; but ten days at Dumpington are more than flesh can stand. I got intolerably tired of its monotony, and for a little change I thought I would make love to you.

MRS. P. What, for a little change!

EDWIN. No other reason I assure you. Fortunately, Ethel thought she'd occupy the time in making love to

Captain Plunger. I didn't like her making love to him, and so I thought she mightn't like my making love to you, and I'm not going to do it any more. I further beg to state that Mrs. Larkspur is not on the look out for a husband, that in my opinion she has not gone off at all, and that I don't believe she ever angled after anyone.

ETHEL. (*running out*) You dear old darling, you're the greatest love that is or ever was or ever will be. I don't care for anyone but you. I only flirted to cure you. I beg your pardon, and I'll never do so any more; and you'll forgive me, won't you? (*on her knees*)

EDWIN. Ethel, are you on the look-out for a husband?

ETHEL. Edwin, did you never see a girl three times without proposing to her?

EDWIN. Did you angle after Captain Plunger?

ETHEL. Did you say that if you'd thought I should accept you, you should never have proposed to me?

EDWIN. I didn't. You've been told a lot of wicked stories. (*raising her*)

ETHEL. So have you.

MRS. P. What a delightful reconciliation!

EDWIN. Yes, it is delightful, Mrs. Plunger, to discover in one's wife a woman who's as amiable after marriage as before.

MRS. P. Oh, Ethel always had the reputation of an amiable woman. People said, when I was quite a child, she was an amiable woman.

ETHEL. (*aside to EDWIN*) Never mind her, she doesn't know that Captain Plunger first proposed to me.

EDWIN. What, in his whiskers?

ETHEL. Yes.

EDWIN. And you rejected them?

ETHEL. For you!

EDWIN. I've licked the whiskers! Bravo! "See the conquering hero comes, sound the trumpets, beat the drums!" (*band strikes up again*) Oh, no, don't, please.

Re-enter CAPTAIN PLUNGER through R. window.

CAPT. Here's that dreadful band again. The leader says the bagpipes have told everyone we're pitching out

half crowns, and all the music in the town is on its way here.

MRS. P. Captain Plunger, I am given to understand that you've been going on with Mrs. Larkspur in a most improper manner.

CAPT. Nothing of the sort, my love. I never flirt—when you are with me.

EDWIN. If he has, you must forgive him this time, Mrs. Plunger, as my wife's forgiven me. (*band stops*)

CAPT. What's she forgiven you, Larkspur?

ETHEL. I've forgiven him his going on with Mrs. Plunger.

CAPT. So have I. I don't at all resent his going on with Mrs. Plunger.

MRS. P. Oh, you monster!

CAPT. What I should resent would be his going off with Mrs. Plunger.

MRS. P. I mean, oh, you darling.

Re-enter WAITER, R.

WAITER. If you please, the family with the measles has sent up to say as how they can't have all the music turned away. It brings the rash out beautiful.

EDWIN. All right then. Let them have their fill. It makes no difference to us, as we leave Dumpington to-morrow.

WAITER. Leave to-morrow, sir! What for?

ETHEL. "A LITTLE CHANGE."

(*a concert of street music outside*)

Curtain.